

this happened. We know that the virus jumped species, from the bat to a human being and then went around the world.

We also know, for a fact, that this particular virus, like all viruses, acts uniquely. It is not exactly the same as other viruses that have jumped species and gone around the world. This one was unique in that, unlike some of the ones we have had in the past—this is our sixth experience since 2003 with the virus—this moved around the world at an incredibly fast speed. It was much more like a house on fire than the other diseases that we have talked about, like smallpox or polio. Its speed was unique. It was new. It was different.

As a result of that, historical organizations that have dealt with these in the past were not expecting it and were not geared for it. They thought this virus would move much like the others that we have dealt with. The result of that, of course, was that it got away from us, from the world, and we now find ourselves in the position we are in because that happened.

It is my hope, and it is my objective—and hopefully will be the objective of our committee, eventually the objective of the U.S. Senate, and hopefully eventually the objective of the world—that we develop a protocol for dealing with a virus or, for that matter, any other health challenge that moves at the speed of light and like a house on fire as opposed to a small, creeping thing that we have had in the past in some of the other challenges we have had.

It is different. There is no doubt it is different. It is going to have to be dealt with differently, and we are going to have to develop a protocol that does address this speed. It is going to entail—and this is probably the heaviest lift of all of it we are going to do—the 200 governments around the world to come together and agree that when something like this happens in their country, instead of covering it up or instead of making political excuses, or instead of hoping it is going to go away, that instead they call the fire department. And the fire department will be a new agency or perhaps even one of the old agencies that we have had that are geared to handle a pandemic that moves at this speed or presents other challenges.

The institutions we have simply aren't geared to do that, which we found out with this epidemic. I think a good example is, as my good friend from Illinois mentioned, the Ebola challenge we had. The historical institutions, I think, dealt quickly with that and really held down the damage from it, which could have been much worse than what it was. We need to develop protocols for dealing with this.

This is going to be a challenge. There is no question it is going to be a challenge because politics comes into this simply because of governments in the various 200 countries around the world

have to deal with this. When they do deal with it, they have different ways of dealing with it.

As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, I deal with our diplomats who deal with the diplomats from other countries. We deal with them on the committee directly, but since this thing has hit, we haven't had as much direct contact, but our diplomats have continued to have contact. In talking with them, one of the things I find particularly disturbing is, I ask: Are the Chinese humble about this? How are they dealing with this? What is their view of what has happened here? Interestingly enough, they take it as an opportunity to compare our form of government to their form of government. And they say: Look, we had a problem; we dealt with it. You guys had the same problem, and you dealt with it. And the reason is because we have this strong authoritarian central government that can control people and can control people in the most severe fashion, and we can deal with it. You people, with all these freedoms and your democracies, you have speech, you have these political arguments, you have these disagreements, and you allow dissent, and when you have that, you can't deal with it. Therefore, our form of government is better than your form of government. That is very dangerous talk.

I am disturbed and disappointed the Chinese Government has viewed this as they have and has not viewed it as we have, as a challenge that is going to take historical changes as we go forward. That is a huge challenge as we go forward, but that shouldn't stop us from making every effort that we can to go forward, and we will.

On the Foreign Relations Committee, it is our intent to hold hearings to deliberate, as the U.S. Senate does, and to produce what hopefully will be a bipartisan piece of legislation, which is substantially broader than what we have here, but hopefully that will include many of the things that we have here, and that will include—as the good Senator from Illinois has indicated—the necessity of including other governments in the effort as we go forward.

I commit to Senator DURBIN, and I commit to all that our committee will undertake this challenge. It is within the jurisdiction and the responsibility of our committee. We take it seriously. We are still in the throes of this, although it feels like we are on the downhill side and are starting to come out of this. As we go forward in a very commonsense, deliberative fashion, we hope to construct legislation that will address all of these very serious issues.

If there is one thing we know for sure—and I am absolutely convinced of it—this is going to happen again. Given the physical situation on the ground in Wuhan, China, and given the fact that there are 2,000 other viruses, probably some of which are substantially worse than this—and, for that matter, the

same situation in other parts of the world—this is going to happen again. Given the population of the world and given the culture of the way we live today in the world and our travel and interconnectedness, this is going to happen again.

We need to be ready for it. We need strong legislation that will address this, not only at the U.S. level but also at the international level. The United States has been the world leader in world health issues, and I anticipate that we will continue to be like that. At the present time, it is under consideration in our committee. At the present time, we can't go forward with this.

Before I state an objection, I want to yield to my good friend from Indiana, who also has some ideas in this regard, and all of which will be, I am sure, constructive on both sides of the aisle. I want to yield the floor to Senator BRAUN at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). Is there an objection?

Mr. RISCH. Not yet.

I want to yield to Senator BRAUN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 658

Mr. BRAUN. Madam President, I object, but my colleague from Illinois is not wrong. I think after I get through explaining my objection, hopefully, there will be something we can work out.

The United States should be engaging more in global efforts to find treatments and vaccines for coronavirus. Governments, academic institutions, scientists, researchers across the world are racing to do it. The United States must work at home and with international partners to develop treatments and vaccines. There is no reason we can't be doing something on our own and working with others across the world.

This is a joint venture, if there ever has been one. However, the nonbinding resolution that my colleague has offered is not an actual solution. I come from the world—and one of the frustrations for being here for just a year and a half is that we don't get more stuff across the finish line. I have a real solution to ensure Americans benefit from the vaccine and treatment development efforts happening across the world. My bill, the ADAPT Act, S. 658, as amended, would create an expedited, almost automatic approval process at the FDA for vaccines and treatments that might occur across the world. We do not have the market cornered on good ideas.

These countries have all developed regulatory systems that are compatible and that should make us feel comfortable. But instead of just talking about it, which we do so much of here, this bill would actually establish the approval reciprocity for treatments and vaccines between the FDA and other trusted counterparts.

If one of them approves a vaccine or treatment, they are quickly, almost automatically, approved here in the United States with my bill. We cannot afford miscommunication or bureaucratic foot-dragging with something so important. My bill ensures that regulators will work proactively to get Americans a vaccine as soon as possible.

Look at the early testing missteps we did have with the CDC. I mentioned that in the briefing last Tuesday. Their overly proscriptive approach delayed our testing capability for the first 40 days. The result has been a one-size-fits-all approach of locking down the economy, which I think we will see some of the disadvantages of that over the next few months.

When my staff talked with the FDA about working with international partners on treatment and vaccine development, the FDA assured them that they have everything under control and are speaking with their international counterparts. The FDA assured my staff that they have covered the issues that might come into play when you are having a partnership with somebody else. The FDA is promoting the idea and having the doors open for developers to submit data and to seek approval for treatments and vaccines.

Until we have a vaccine, reopening will be gradual. We need herd immunity and vaccines to be the final solution to this saga we are going through, but we cannot afford bureaucratic obstacles slowing down regulatory approvals for a successful vaccine.

As we have seen, certain steps of vaccine development can be achieved at warp speed to cut down on development time, but regulatory approvals will not be one of them unless we take legislative action.

The ADAPT Act is real action, not just talk, specifically designed for times like this when scientists across the world are racing to develop treatments and vaccines.

Therefore, with my prior objection, I do not want to leave my friend from Illinois emptyhanded.

Madam President, in hoping my colleague from Illinois will not object, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 658 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the Braun substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. First, let me say to my friend and colleague from Idaho, thank you. The tone of your remarks are

positive, constructive, bipartisan. That is exactly what the American people are looking for, at least in Illinois, and I will bet you in Idaho as well.

This national emergency, this public health crisis, should bring out the best in us and not the most political side of our nature. Thank you because I think your remarks were offered in that respect.

We have been here now 3 weeks. This is the third week since returning from a break where most of us were at home. I think this is the longest period of debate on the coronavirus we have witnessed on the floor of the Senate in 3 weeks.

I thought this 3-week period would be all about COVID-19, all about the vaccine. It hasn't. We have taken up many other things that have nothing to do with it. What we have talked about here this morning is encouraging to me. If bringing this resolution up with a unanimous consent request is going to lead to the Senate Foreign Relations and other committees moving forward on important policy questions that you raised, and I hope I raised as well, then it was not time wasted. It was time well spent.

We do agree on so much more than we disagree, I am sure of it, when it comes to this. I invite you, I encourage you, I beg you, as soon as we return from next week's recess, the sooner we can bring a hearing before your committee and others the better.

I would like to address the unanimous consent request of my colleague from Indiana as well.

It has been my good fortune in the House and Senate to work with the Food and Drug Administration. It is probably one of the most underrated agencies of our Federal Government. They make decisions, literally, life-and-death decisions, every single day of things unimaginable to us. It is hard to look at all of the things they regulate and inspect and not be impressed. I have been impressed over the years with the Food and Drug Administration. But the gold standard of the Food and Drug Administration, which was established at least 60 years ago with the Thalidomide scandal, was that this agency was to take a look at drugs that were about to go on the market in America and conduct tests, ask questions, do their own research to determine two things: Are they safe, and are they effective? Safe and effective. That is it. But it is a lot.

Over the years, for 60 years or more, they have used this standard to judge drugs, clinical trials, which carefully measure the impacts of a drug on the human body over a period of time and the like. It is frustrating because, at times, it takes longer than we wish. There are exceptions that have been created at the Food and Drug Administration for extraordinary circumstances wherein it can accelerate the process, but by and large, it has to judge drugs as being safe and effective.

Nearly three-quarters of drugs today are approved in the United States by

the Food and Drug Administration before they are approved in any other country around the world. The FDA is considered the gold standard. I have been told that so many times. Many countries look to the Food and Drug Administration in the United States to see if it has approved of a drug's being safe and effective before they move forward. This demonstrates that the Food and Drug Administration has an awesome responsibility but is doing a good job in ensuring Americans have timely access to the same drugs as have patients in other countries.

The ADAPT Act, which Senator BRAUN brings to the floor, is a solution, I believe, in search of a problem. Sadly, it runs a real risk. This notion that we are somehow going to open up the possibility of a drug's having been approved in another country being approved in the United States quickly, without any review, I think is a dangerous thing to do.

To date, we know what the coronavirus has done to us, and we also know that this bill would completely change how drugs would be approved for sale in the United States of America. It is not a minor bill. It is a major change. Under current law, if a pharmaceutical company wants to sell a drug, it needs the approval of the FDA. It tests it to be sure it is safe and effective. It is the gold standard.

The Senator's proposal would abolish this method. That is significant. Instead, the Senator's proposal says, if a drug has been approved by another developed country—I am not sure of his definition of a "developed country"—it can bypass standard U.S. regulation and come to market without going through the Food and Drug Administration's study, review, and approval.

It is worth noting that many Members of the House and Senate have criticized the pharmaceutical industry for charging Americans the highest drug prices in the world. I have been in that chorus from time to time and have suggested that drug prices in the United States should be the same as they are in Canada and Europe for the same drugs. Many times, people on the Senator's side of the aisle have resisted that suggestion. They have called it socialism and have said we shouldn't let other countries dictate what America has to pay for drugs. Yet, now, apparently, Senator BRAUN is comfortable with letting other countries dictate whether our drugs are safe and effective.

This bill is not a targeted response to the coronavirus; it is an open-ended giveaway to some pharmaceutical operation. More importantly, it is putting our safety at risk in America, which we never ever want to do. Instead of approving the resolution I introduced that simply expresses the support for global coordination, Senator BRAUN wants to completely overturn our Nation's drug approval process.

This bill was introduced more than a year ago. It is still in search of a cosponsor, and it hasn't been consented

by the Republican Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, which oversees the FDA. Now is the time for the best and the brightest from all nations to work together toward the shared goal of ending this pandemic and finding a safe and effective vaccine. It is not the time to completely upend our Nation's drug approval process to make it easy for some countries to flood our market with unsafe and ineffective drugs.

For these reasons, I object to Senator BRAUN's counterproposal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard for both unanimous consent requests.

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Madam President, this may be a rare moment of some collegiality on the idea in general. I think the American public and, especially, I, who is one who has watched this place operate for so many years in my leading up to the point when I ran for the Senate, accept the kind of guidance that there may need to be more fleshed out, and the Senator objected to it.

Yet I think the American public deserves action out of this place, and so often it seems we dawdle and do not get to the point. Look at how long it took the body to come to an agreement on criminal justice reform. One of the first questions I asked when I got here was, How long have you been working on it? The answer—10 to 12 years. When you look at what we do get accomplished here, I think we need to figure out how we become more effective, how we get things done more quickly, and how we pay for it in the long run.

So I am going to savor the moment we have here. We are at least talking about it. Hopefully, we will be able to work with my neighbor from Illinois to still push the idea that this is a critical time and that we need to get something done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I believe there is a unanimous consent request pending. Has there been an objection to my original unanimous consent request?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objections were heard to both unanimous consent requests.

The Senator from North Carolina.

#### REMEMBERING TOM COBURN

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I think divine intervention has played a part here with this exchange and the comments of my colleagues because I am here to pay tribute to my good friend Tom Coburn, who, on March 28, passed away—our colleague and, more importantly, a dear friend. I almost sat in the cloakroom and then came out here, thinking this could be a conversation that Dr. Coburn could be having on the Senate floor about the need to accomplish things, to think outside the box. Yet, as my good friend from Illinois said, don't destroy the gold standard

that is there; find a way to work within it. Dr. Coburn had a lifetime of doing that.

To pay tribute to a friend and a colleague, I actually have to rewind 26 years, when both Tom Coburn and I came to the House of Representatives in a large class. It was alphabetical, so you can see how "B" and "C" would be close and how Chambliss would be a friend and Latham. We were a cadre of folks who really sized up very quickly whom it could trust.

To understand Tom Coburn is to understand that this was a guy with an incredibly diverse background in that he ran a medical device company, in that he was an OB/GYN, in that he experienced things in life and, in my case, was a little bit older. To understand Tom Coburn is to remember the commercial wherein the bull went into the china store, and no matter which way it turned, it was always going to break something. Tom believed that you had to break something to understand whether it was important or whether it was just clutter.

I think, like every new Member of Congress, you come in with a belief that you are going to change the world but have no idea how to do it, and you find that people who have been there for their careers hold all of the cards, and that is the knowledge of how that legislation was crafted and why it was done. To understand Tom Coburn is to realize that this didn't scare him. Tom knew a lot, and when he hit things he didn't know, he sounded like he did; therefore, people were scared to take him on.

As a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, on which we both served, Tom was incredibly instrumental in healthcare policy, in medical device issues. Tom was a practicing OB/GYN when he got to the House and then, later on, when he got to the Senate, and he never could understand why he could not go back to Oklahoma on the weekends and deliver babies. Now, this is a man who had delivered tens of thousands of babies over his career in Oklahoma, but the way the Senate rules are—they are so antiquated—you couldn't go home and keep up your license to deliver babies because you could not earn money. Tom challenged that when he was in the U.S. Senate. He challenged that antiquated rule, and he lost.

So, as I sat and listened to this debate that was about healthcare, I could only sit there and think about the argument that Tom Coburn had made about this antiquated rule that what you came in with and practiced in civilian life you had to throw overboard here. You could no longer do it. Tom decided he would go back on the weekends and deliver babies. Yet, rather than have them make payments to him, they would make payments to nonprofit organizations in his hometown of Tulsa, and they would make them commensurate as to what they could afford.

So, for a guy who was perceived as the right of the right hard-liner, Tom was probably one of the most compassionate individuals. He was one of the individuals who understood the common person, because, in his mind, he was one his entire life—one who was never privileged, who earned everything he got, and who banked everything he learned. Ultimately, at the end of his career, he used that for this institution, for the American people, and for people around the world.

Early on, I remember Tom and my sitting down with John Dingell, the former Democratic chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee. John Dingell, who was a great man and whom Tom and I both liked a lot, either wrote every bill that came out of the Energy and Commerce Committee or his dad did before him for, probably, 60 years. John had an inherent advantage every time we argued legislation because he either wrote it or his dad wrote it. He knew why he did it, and he knew why they structured it the way they did. I think John recognized something in Tom—that here was a guy who could bring fresh life to it.

At the time, I remember Chairman Dingell sitting us down and saying: Guys, spend a year listening, not a year talking.

Well, that was easy for me to do because I didn't know a whole lot when I got here, but that was the toughest thing Tom Coburn was ever faced with was to be silent because he really came in and wanted to change the world in short order.

When he got there, Tom said: I will only be here for 6 years.

He accomplished a tremendous amount. His imprint is felt by the people in the House today. You might remember he was probably the loudest voice for government waste—for the size of what we spent, for how much we took from the American people, and for what bad stewards we were of how we used it and spent it. I think Tom left with peace from the House of Representatives because, for the first time in our lifetimes, the budget was balanced.

None of us anticipated what would happen in 2000 and the effects of 9/11, and nobody was more shocked than I, in the same year I came from the House to the Senate, to see Tom Coburn run as a Senate candidate for the State of Oklahoma. Tom came in with the same belief that we needed to change things and that we needed to do it quickly. Tom served on the House Intelligence Committee. When he got to the U.S. Senate and served on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Tom understood much better the challenges with which we were faced. I will not say that his approach changed but that Tom assessed what was possible and never went for what was impossible.

There are Senators in this Chamber who haven't had the good fortune to serve with a Tom Coburn, who haven't been influenced and educated by some

of the things Tom Coburn impacted many of us with—those of us who spent our entire careers with him. Yet the American people will feel the benefits of Tom Coburn's education here, his imprint on this institution.

JAMES LANKFORD, the Senator from Oklahoma, picked up his "Pig Book" that he put out every year, which is a list of those insane expenditures that Tom Coburn used to come up with on an annual basis to make us all feel shameful about the appropriations process. Thank goodness Tom Coburn did that because JAMES LANKFORD still does it today on an annual basis.

I probably can't point to anything more important than healthcare to tell you how Tom's impact on this institution has been felt, and I think it will be felt for years to come. Tom and I believed that there was a different direction, not because we were smart but because the one we were on didn't work.

I remember sitting down with Dr. Coburn, and he said: We are going to change the healthcare architecture.

I said: Tom, you have been doing this for a long time. What architecture works?

He said: Well, we are going to have to try them all, and when we find one that doesn't fail, we will know that one is right.

When he got to that point, without hesitation, Tom came to the Senate floor and talked about the Patients' Choice Act over and over and over again. In the 3 or 4 years since Tom has been gone from the institution, the debate has shifted. In fact, where Tom Coburn was and where he tried to tell our colleagues we needed to settle—in empowering patients and bringing transparency to healthcare—is something we struggle with today.

There was no bigger advocate for transparency in healthcare costs than Tom Coburn, and when the administration tried to administer that this year, hospitals went to court and won—meaning, they don't have to publish pricing. To the average person, that makes no sense. For those of us who had been on the frontline with Tom Coburn, finally, an administration had done it only to see it overruled. Yet, even on the day he died, it was one of the key things that Tom believed—that transparency was absolutely essential in the healthcare process.

I can remember Tom was not new to cancer. I think he fought cancer four or five times. One day, during his most recent battle, we were coming up on the Christmas holiday, I remember, and I think he was in his chemotherapy treatment. He was still in the U.S. Senate, and Tom was exhausted at the time. In between votes, he would go to the cloakroom and lie down on the couch. Everybody knew he didn't feel well. When he would get up to vote, we would look at the pillow. It looked like a cat had been on it as Tom's hair would stay on the pillow. Now, he never lost it all, but we understood the

challenges he was going through in his own personal life that he never expressed with any of his colleagues or friends.

I have never seen a person who battled as peacefully as did Tom Coburn. His impact will be felt for generations to come, not just here but by the kids he delivered in Oklahoma, who today are 2 and 3 and 4 and 5 years old—kids who will grow up reading about their hero from Oklahoma.

Though Tom had a distinguished congressional career and will be remembered for a lot of legislative victories, that is not Tom Coburn's greatest claim to fame. I have never known an individual more devoted to a wife than Tom Coburn was to Carolyn. She was a beauty queen. She was when she was young, and she was, in Tom's eyes, on the day he died. He loved her without question. Tom also loved his daughters. He was so proud of their accomplishments. He and Carolyn worked to make sure they finally moved so they had everybody close. I think Tom knew that the wheel of luck was going to run out. Yet, you see, that is not the way Tom looked at it. He wanted to spend every precious moment with his wife, his kids, and his grandchildren. He wanted any impact and impression he could make to be on that next generation of Coburns.

For all of the qualities in Tom Coburn that I could talk about, there is not enough time to really praise him. It would take days, and it would take many individuals to come up and do it. It is probably impossible to say goodbye to a friend like Tom Coburn. To me, there is no question that I came to trust and value everything that Tom stood for.

The one thing about Tom Coburn that many people knew was that Tom had this tremendous peace about himself. I think some might have thought it was because Tom had had such a stellar background and had known so much. The truth is, if you had sat and talked to Tom, you would have found out the truth. Tom loved his Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't hide it. When given the opportunity, he wanted to share that peace with anybody who was willing to sit and listen. Tom was criticized for where he lived because it was certainly religious in leaning, but that was Tom's life. As much as he adored his wife and children and grandchildren, he adored his Lord just as much.

My colleagues were blessed to have Tom Coburn's influence on this institution. Not everybody in America understands how blessed they are to have had his influence on the policies and the way future generations will be impacted by Tom Coburn for all of his works. Today Tom may be in Heaven—no, today Tom is in Heaven, and I would bet my colleagues that he is giving them hell. He is up there trying to change the architecture of the deck chairs. He is up trying to say: Why do we do things this way and not that way?

One of the things that used to bug Tom about this institution is he couldn't figure out why we had telephones in the U.S. Senate that looked as though they were created in 1950. You might remember, about 5 or 6 years ago, the Senate got new phones. They still will not redial from the last number you called, and they still look like they are from the Soviet era of the 1950s, but that is the way the U.S. Senate is, and that is what Tom was trying to change. In many aspects he may not have changed the telephone, but he changed the institution. He changed the way we look at it.

Although he may be challenging the rules in Heaven today, make no mistake about him, he is still preaching the Word and he has always believed that Word. For all of the things Tom Coburn tried to accomplish, he did it in a way that his Lord would have been proud of him.

My colleagues, I know others will pay tribute to Tom Coburn's work here. I am here today to pay tribute to Tom Coburn's life, not just the impact he had on this institution or the Congress of the United States as a whole but the example he set for all of us that life doesn't have to be fair. But we as individuals have to be committed, and Tom Coburn was committed to everything in life that he did. I am sure today Tom continues to preach commitment to those who will listen.

With that, I honor his passing, and I say this to him in the spirit that it is meant. Several days after we got word that he had passed, I said to my wife: With COVID-19 and Congress dislocated, what would Tom Coburn have done? She looked at me and she said: He would have grown a beard.

We all remember those days when, all of a sudden, he would show up, and the beard was grown, and he would say: Until this is over, I am not going to shave. And that day I decided not to shave.

I was going to give this tribute to Tom Coburn last week. The events of last week didn't permit me to come do that tribute, and I couldn't make it through this week until I got home and shaved because it was the most aggravating thing that I have ever had, and I understood why in 64 years I hadn't grown any facial hair. I proved that I could do it because I was honoring my friend.

I hope that others in this institution will look on Tom Coburn's contributions in the same way I do, as a very special exposure that we all had.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks before the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as we continue our work here in the Senate, COVID-19 continues to be at the top of

our agenda. We are monitoring implementation of the \$2.4 trillion of the coronavirus funding that we provided, and we are talking to experts about what is needed to help our country reopen. Our committees, where so much of our key legislative work is done, have held a number of coronavirus hearings over the past 2 weeks, and there are more on the agenda.

This week, the Committee on Aging will hold a hearing on caring for seniors during the coronavirus crisis. The Senate Banking Committee will hold a hearing with Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell to discuss implementation of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act—the CARES Act—which was our largest coronavirus relief bill.

The Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee will hold a hearing to consider the nomination of Brian D. Miller to be special inspector general for pandemic recovery at the Treasury Department. With just an ounce of cooperation from Democrats, we could confirm this important watchdog yet this week.

Finally, the Commerce Committee, of which I am a member, will be in executive session to consider legislation and nominations, including two coronavirus bills.

Of course, while coronavirus remains our top priority, we are also focused on doing the other business the American people expect us to do, from funding our government to protecting our Nation. Last week, the Senate voted to reauthorize three expired provisions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that provide essential tools to our law enforcement and intelligence communities, as well as a number of reforms to strengthen privacy protections and guard against abuses.

We have also been considering nominations for key administration posts, including Director of National Intelligence and Secretary of the Navy. This week, we expect to confirm a nominee to reestablish a quorum at the Federal Election Commission, as well as a number of nominees to fill vacancies on Federal district courts.

So that is what the Senate has been doing. What has the House of Representatives been up to? Well, until last Friday, the answer was not much. But on Friday, the House brought its Members back to Washington to vote on a massive, \$3 trillion piece of legislation the Democratic leaders billed as coronavirus relief. In reality, as one House Democrat pointed out, the legislation is nothing more than a mesaging bill—that from a House Democrat.

Under the guise of coronavirus relief, House leaders put together a massive package of liberal priorities that they well knew would be dead on arrival here in the U.S. Senate. How unserious is their bill? Well, the Democrats' legislation mentions the word "cannabis"—"cannabis"—more often than the word "jobs."

Let me repeat that. House Democrats' legislation mentions the word "cannabis" more often than the word "jobs."

In case Democrats didn't realize, Americans are not suffering from lack of cannabis right now. They are suffering from a lack of employment.

Let me mention some other highlights of the Democrats' legislation: a tax cut for millionaires and billionaires; stimulus checks for illegal immigrants and deadbeat dads; environmental justice grants to study pollution; significant changes to election law—that is really related to the coronavirus—a ban on sharing information about lower cost health insurance options; and more. I could go on. The list literally goes on and on.

Unfortunately, while Democrats were focused on federalizing election law and requiring studies on diversity in the cannabis industry, they forgot about a few basics. Their bill does not include any meaningful plan to get Americans back to work. It provides hardly any relief or support for small businesses. It doesn't touch the issue of liability reform—even though preventing frivolous coronavirus lawsuits will be key to getting our economy going again—and it doesn't do anything to hold China accountable. The Democrats' bill is a fundamentally unserious bill at an incredibly serious time.

Democratic leaders knew from the beginning that there was no chance of this legislation getting through the Senate or being signed by the President. In fact, Democrats had some work to do to persuade members of their own caucus to vote for the bill. As POLITICO put it, "As of late Thursday evening, the House Democratic leadership was engaged in what a few senior aides and lawmakers described as the most difficult arm-twisting of the entire Congress: convincing their rank and file to vote for a \$3 trillion stimulus bill that will never become law."

Unfortunately, Democratic leaders were successful in their arm-twisting, and the bill did pass the House, albeit with some Democratic defections.

I have talked about the liberal wish list in this bill, but I haven't mentioned the other aspect of this proposal, and that is the enormous pricetag, a portion of which, of course, wouldn't even go to anything coronavirus-related. My friends across the aisle think that all problems can be solved with more money or a new government program, but they can't. And spending too much money can actually hurt rather than help Americans.

So far, we have spent \$2.4 trillion to fight the coronavirus. That is a tremendous amount of money, but these are extraordinary circumstances, and they call for an extraordinary response. We may very well have to spend more before this pandemic is over, and if we need to, we will. But we have an absolute obligation to make

sure we are spending only what is needed.

Every dollar we have spent so far on this pandemic is borrowed money—every single dollar. It is money we needed to borrow, and we were glad to do it, but we do need to remember that it is borrowed money, and the younger workers and our children and grandchildren are going to be paying for it. We have an obligation to them to borrow only what is absolutely necessary to fight and beat this virus. Diversity studies for the cannabis industry should not be making that cut.

Some of the Democrats' proposals might be acceptable at another time, and I emphasize the word "some." But no matter how worthy the proposal, there is a limit to what we can responsibly spend, and we have to prioritize measures that will directly fight the virus and get Americans back to work.

Republicans are also focused on developing measures that will help fight the virus and get our economy going again without spending trillions of dollars—something I might recommend to my Democratic colleagues. We are currently working on a package of liability protections. Personal injury lawyers are already filing coronavirus-related cases, and we need to ensure that frivolous lawsuits don't hamstring our economic recovery while ensuring that real cases of gross negligence and misconduct are punished.

We are considering a lot of other measures to provide relief while driving up the national debt as little as possible, such as regulatory reform and tax protection for healthcare workers who cross State lines to provide their services. I am pushing for approval of my Mobile Workforce State Income Tax Simplification Act, which I introduced last year, along with Senator SHERROD BROWN.

Our legislation would create an across-the-board tax standard for mobile employees who spend a short period of time working across State lines. It would ensure that States receive fair tax payments while substantially simplifying tax requirements for employees and employers. This legislation has particular relevance in the age of coronavirus, with doctors and nurses crossing State lines to voluntarily work in States that have been hit hard by the pandemic.

The Governor of New York is looking to cash in on the pandemic and has already threatened to subject these medical professionals to New York's income tax. We need to make sure that doctors and nurses who travel to other States to help fight the coronavirus aren't rewarded with big tax bills.

Partisan messaging bills, such as the one the House Democrats passed last week, are a waste of Democrats' time but, more importantly, do nothing to serve the American people. How many hours did the Democrats spend on their massive liberal wish list—hours that could have been spent working with Republicans to come up with real relief

measures? But that is pretty much par for the course for Democrats these days. They are intent on remaking America according to their ever more extreme leftist agenda. They are certainly not going to let a national crisis get in the way. In fact, more than one leader of the Democratic Party has spoken with pleasure of the opportunity the pandemic presents to remake America in their far-left image.

It is deeply disappointing that Democrats are more focused on their pet projects than on addressing this pandemic and its consequences, but that will not stop the Republican-led Senate from moving forward with the business of the American people, and I hope that Democrats will eventually decide to join us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Rash nomination?

Mr. THUNE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 74, nays 20, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 94 Ex.]

#### YEAS—74

|              |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Feinstein  | Paul       |
| Barrasso     | Fischer    | Perdue     |
| Bennet       | Gardner    | Peters     |
| Blackburn    | Graham     | Portman    |
| Blunt        | Grassley   | Risch      |
| Boozman      | Hassan     | Roberts    |
| Braun        | Hawley     | Romney     |
| Burr         | Hoeben     | Rosen      |
| Capito       | Hyde-Smith | Rubio      |
| Cardin       | Inhofe     | Sasse      |
| Carper       | Johnson    | Scott (FL) |
| Cassidy      | Jones      | Scott (SC) |
| Collins      | Kaine      | Shaheen    |
| Coons        | Kennedy    | Shelby     |
| Cornyn       | King       | Sinema     |
| Cortez Masto | Lankford   | Smith      |
| Cotton       | Leahy      | Sullivan   |
| Cramer       | Lee        | Tester     |
| Crapo        | Loeffler   | Thune      |
| Cruz         | Manchin    | Tillis     |
| Daines       | McConnell  | Toomey     |
| Duckworth    | McSally    | Warner     |
| Durbin       | Moran      | Wicker     |
| Enzi         | Murkowski  | Young      |
| Ernst        | Murphy     |            |

#### NAYS—20

|            |           |            |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Blumenthal | Hirono    | Schumer    |
| Booker     | Klobuchar | Stabenow   |
| Cantwell   | Menendez  | Udall      |
| Casey      | Merkley   | Van Hollen |
| Gillibrand | Murray    | Warren     |
| Harris     | Reed      | Wyden      |
| Heinrich   | Schatz    |            |

#### NOT VOTING—6

|           |        |            |
|-----------|--------|------------|
| Alexander | Markey | Sanders    |
| Brown     | Rounds | Whitehouse |

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the President's action.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:39 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

#### NOMINATION OF JAMES E. TRAINOR III

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, we are here to vote on a nominee, James Trainor, to be a Commissioner at the Federal Election Commission—the independent agency responsible for enforcing Federal campaign finance laws.

I am deeply disappointed in today's vote, which is a departure from the Senate's longstanding tradition of considering FEC nominees on a bipartisan basis and another step in eroding the traditions of the Senate—all for a candidate who holds extreme views toward the agency to which he would be appointed.

Prior to today, the Senate has voted to confirm 47 FEC nominees, and 42 of those nominees have been confirmed through a bipartisan process. As the ranking Democrat on the Rules and Administration Committee, I have repeatedly urged my Republican colleagues to work with us to get the FEC running again, as it is unacceptable that the agency charged with protecting the integrity of our campaign finance system has been without a quorum for 261 days—the longest period without a quorum in the agency's history—but this is not the way to do it.

The FEC has been plagued by partisan gridlock for years. With a general election only 168 days away, we should be working together to make sure that the agency is working to the fullest extent possible. Americans are tired of hyperpartisanship and gridlock. This is not the time to abandon the bipartisan tradition of moving FEC nominees together. We need to work to restore their trust in our political institutions, and with this vote, we are taking a

step backward. We all know that our campaign finance system is broken. Everyone in this room knows it. Spending on campaigns has gotten out of control, and special interest groups are a major part of the problem.

Experts suggest that at least \$6 billion will be spent in the 2020 election cycle on political advertisements alone. That doesn't count the billions that will be spent by the campaigns themselves and the additional billions spent by dark money groups and special interests which are trying to influence this election. In order for our democracy to work, we need strong rules for campaign spending, and we need a strong agency to enforce those rules. We should be working together, on a bipartisan basis, to propose solutions to try to get the FEC back on track.

I have a few ideas. We should work together to pass legislation to reform the FEC's rules so it functions better. We should establish a working group that will investigate bipartisan solutions to improve the function of the FEC. We should also work together to elect strong nominees from both parties who will serve on the Commission with the understanding that they are there to enforce the law and protect our election system—and, oh, does this election system need protecting right now.

We are in the midst of a pandemic. We have people standing in garbage bags and homemade masks in the rain in Wisconsin just trying to exercise their right to vote. Nearly 50 of those people got sick. We have a poll worker who got sick. We have States all over the country, with both Democratic and Republican Governors, that are desperately trying to get funding so we can have more at-home voting and have the polls open earlier and have them open for days so people don't have to all congregate on 1 day, and on that day we have to also make our elections safer. We have a lot to do.

When it comes to elections, we know that the enforcement agency for things like campaign finance is the FEC. We know it is broken, and we as a body should work to improve it.

My Republican colleagues, on this particular nominee, have repeatedly said that by confirming Mr. Trainor they are doing some good restoring a quorum. OK. That is not the full story of this nomination. It ignores the fact that gridlock will persist, and Republicans have intentionally left a Democratic seat on the Commission vacant for more than 1,100 days.

It ignores the fact that Leader SCHUMER and I referred a Democratic candidate to the White House for consideration and that she has been vetted and cleared. She is immensely qualified, and she would be the first person of color to ever sit on the FEC. Yes, that is right, the first person of color not only in this Congress but the first person of color in the history of the Federal Elections Commission to serve on the Commission.